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SCAG PUTS MAGLEV ON THE FAST TRACK

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Regional Board Approves Initial Operating Segment For Much-Needed High-Speed Transportation System

ONTARIO, CA – At a special meeting of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council, local elected leaders approved the initial leg of an innovative 275-mile high-speed transportation system based on Magnetic Levitation, or Maglev, train technology. SCAG believes that Maglev can provide major relief to Southern California's chronic traffic congestion problems, with trains whisking passengers along at speeds of more than 200 miles per hour.

Unlike traditional "steel wheel" rail systems, Maglev trains are propelled by powerful electro-magnets that allow the train to move effortlessly along elevated guideways. SCAG has been examining a regional high-speed network for several years and recently included a regional Maglev system in its 2001 Regional Transportation Plan, a comprehensive 20-year blueprint for Southern California's transportation network.

After considering several alternatives, the SCAG Regional Council adopted an east-west segment that would include stops in West Los Angeles, Union Station, the San Gabriel Valley, Ontario Airport, Riverside, and March Air Field near Moreno Valley. One-way travel on the 92-mile Maglev corridor would take only 53 minutes, less than half the time needed to travel that distance currently by auto during rush hour.

With the Initial Operating Segment (IOS) selected, SCAG will now seek federal pre-deployment planning funds as Congress begins debate on TEA-3, its comprehensive federal transportation measure, next year. Construction and operation of the Maglev system will be undertaken by a public-private partnership. Once the pre-deployment planning and environmental review is complete, construction of the new Maglev system would begin within several years. The current deployment schedule paves the way for segments of the Maglev system to begin operating before the end of the decade.

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“Maglev is a unique but proven technology that SCAG believes can not only help to alleviate future traffic congestion in one of Southern California’s busiest corridors, but it also can provide traffic relief in a way that protects the environment and requires minimal right-of-way acquisitions,” said Mark Pisano, SCAG executive director. “The system identified today would also provide air travelers with greater choices by establishing high-speed connections between several major airports. We are very excited about the possibilities that Maglev presents.”

SCAG’s Maglev Task Force and a consultant team led by Lockheed Martin have been evaluating a series of potential routes for Maglev development, examining such factors as construction and operational costs, ridership potential, safety, accessibility and other performance measures. SCAG’s Aviation Task Force also reviewed the segment options to determine how the proposed Maglev IOS could best encourage the development of a regional airport system.

The Maglev IOS approved by SCAG might eventually be expanded to include a stop at LAX. Additionally, SCAG approved an amendment requested by State Assemblyman Keith Richman (R-Sylmar) directing its Maglev Task Force and staff to continue efforts to examine other future segments of the larger regional system, including connections to Palmdale, Orange County and the Victor Valley. SCAG is also working in cooperation with the California-Nevada High Speed Rail Commission on a separate proposal to develop a Maglev system that would eventually connect to Las Vegas via Anaheim and Ontario.

For more information about the California Maglev Deployment Program, call Al Perdon at 310/871-1113.

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